Description of document:	Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) Rocky Mountain Power Operations new dispatcher training playbook 2023
Requested date:	17-March-2025
Release date:	29-April-2925
Posted date:	12-May-2025
Source of document:	FOIA Request Western Area Power Administration FOIA Officer - A0200 P.O. Box 281213 Lakewood, CO 80228 Fax: 720-962-7009 Email: FOIA@wapa.gov Western Area Power Administration FOIA Request Form FOIA.gov

Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213

April 29, 2025

WAPA-2025-02520-F

This communication is the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) acknowledgment and final response to your request for agency records made under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (FOIA). Your request was received on March 17, 2025, and formally acknowledged on April 1, 2025.

Request

"A copy of the Rocky Mountain Power Operations new dispatcher training playbook."

Response

WAPA conducted records and information searches in the agency's Operations Support and the electronic information systems where searches were performed in SharePoint system. Those 16 pages accompany this communication, released in full with no redactions applied.

Fees

There are no fees associated with processing your FOIA request.

Certification

Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. § 1004.7, I am the individual responsible for the records search and information release described above. Your FOIA request WAPA-2025-02520-F is now closed with the responsive agency information provided.

Appeal

Note that the records release certified above is final. Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. § 1004.8, you may appeal the adequacy of the records search, and the completeness of this final records release, within 90 calendar days from the date of this communication. Appeals should be addressed to:

Director, Office of Hearings and Appeals
HG-1, L'Enfant Plaza
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585-1615

The written appeal, including the envelope, must clearly indicate that a FOIA appeal is being made. You may also submit your appeal by e-mail to OHA.filings@hq.doe.gov, including the phrase "Freedom of Information Appeal" in the subject line. (The Office of Hearings and Appeals prefers to receive appeals by email.) The appeal must contain all the elements required by 10 C.F.R. § 1004.8, including a copy of the determination letter. Thereafter, judicial review will be available to you in the Federal District Court either (1) in the district where you reside, (2) where you have your principal place of business, (3) where DOE's records are situated, or (4) in the District of Columbia.

You may contact the WAPA FOIA Public Liaison, Christopher Magee, at CMagee@wapa.gov, or (720) 962-7139, or by mail at P.O. Box 281213 Lakewood, CO 80228-8213 for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS
College Park, Maryland 20740-6001
E-mail: ogis@nara.gov
Phone: 202-741-5770
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448
Fax: 202-741-5769

Please refer to the above referenced number in any communications about the request. If you have any questions about the processing of your request, you may contact the agency's FOIA Officer, Mikkiala Grant, at grant@wapa.gov or 720-962-7445. Thank you for your interest in the Western Administration Power Area.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mikkiala Grant
Mikkiala Grant
FOIA Officer
Western Administration Power Area

WAPA

Power System Dispatcher Trainee Playbook

Rocky Mountain Region
Phoenix, Arizona and Loveland, Colorado

Western Area Power Administration

5/4/2023

Table of Contents

Background

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) has been known to hire folks from other utilities with experience in System Operations (Dispatchers). In the early 1980s WAPA realized that wasn't sustainable, so they created a System Operator (Power System Dispatcher) trainee program where folks were hired off the street or from within the government and participated in a two-year program. In addition to other qualification and eligibility requirements, successful completion of the assessment center was required to qualify for the AD-1 and AD-2 level.

In this first program, the trainees learned all aspects of Power System Operations. The first classes had 6 to 12 students and were split between the regional operations offices. Four times a year, the trainees met at the EPTC and participated in EPTC training to support the training material that was taught at the regional level. The generic system operator training material was developed and managed in-house by WAPA trainers who were in the respective regional operations offices. Managing this program was very time consuming.

In the mid-1990s the training material was updated, and new classes of trainees were hired. This WAPA-wide program would be supported by all WAPA regions; however, each region has created their own one-off programs based on regional needs. In the early 2000s, WAPA partnered with Bismarck State College (BSC) and other utilities to create an accredited college program to help people who wanted to become system operators.

Chapter 1: The Assessment Center

After the job had been posted and closed, potential candidates were mailed the Plum Creek water system information and were notified of the interview process and event assessment. The candidates had one week to study the Plum creek system.

The Candidate assessment center had two parts:

1. The Interview: Used to determine how the candidate works with others, handles pressure, manages conflict, and maintains situational awareness.
2. The Event Analysis: Used to see how the candidate works under pressure, multi-tasks, and prioritizes.

Both concepts are key in becoming a successful System Operator (Dispatcher). This is structured using the Plum Creek water system, and 12 events that happen over a one-hour period. These results will help the interview team determine if a candidate will be offered a trainee position at WAPA.

Chapter 2: Electrical Transmission System Technology (ETST) Overview

Bismarck State College has been a leading provider of energy education for more than 45 years. With a dozen degree and certificate offerings in a variety of energy-related programs, the college prepares graduates with the skills and education they need for successful, life-long career opportunities in the energy industry. The BSC Electrical Transmission System Technology (ETST) program is an 18-month certificate or a 24-month program. Once the 24 months program is completed, the student will earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in ETST.

Benefits to using BSC course material:

- Candidate will become qualified in an industry with critical employment needs
- Program available entirely online and online courses are flexible to fit varying work schedules
- Interactive industry-approved online education
- Courses begin every 3-5 weeks throughout the year
- Leverage cutting edge learning tools
- Accelerate development from within
- Standardized curriculum across regional/national footprint
- Teaches students about the electrical power system in North America, including basic electricity, generation, distribution, and transmission, with a strong emphasis on system operations.

Courses in this program are approved for North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) continuing education hours (CEHs) combined with college credit.

ETST 240	Power Industry Concepts
ENRT 106	DC Fundamentals
ENRT 108	AC Fundamentals
ETST 250	Electrical Generation Theories
ETST 254	Substations
ETST 256	Transformers
ETST 258	Protective Relaying
ETST 260	Electrical Diagram Interpretation
ETST 262	Power System Operations
ETST 266	Interconnected System Operations
ETST 268	Power Flow
ETST 270	System Operator Work Practices
ETST 272	Power System Safety
ETST 274	SCADA Systems and Communications
ETST 276	Power System Economics
ETST 278	Power System Emergency Concepts

Bismarck State College-ETST Program Progression and WAPA's Performance Expectations:

Dispatch Trainees shall be progressing in the training program by completing and passing each ETST program course with a score of 80% or higher.

If Dispatch Trainees continue to score lower than 80%, WAPA management will coordinate with the trainee, human resource on potential course of action.

Chapter 3: Apprentice Power System Dispatcher Program

This program will mirror the original trainee program inasmuch that it is a two-year program, however the trainees will utilize the Bismarck State College Online ETST program for 18 months with six additional months of On-the-Job Training (OJT) in WAPA System Operations prior to being assigned to a desk and qualified to work on shift.

WAPA Employee's (internal)

WAPA employees apply for, and once they pass the assessment center, they are brought into system operations group as and AD1 or AD 2 based on the AD minimum qualifications at save pay.

Area of Concern: Off Ramp or if employee determines that this position isn't for them.

Non- WAPA (External)

Candidates who apply for and pass the assessment center, are hired into the system operations group as an AD1 or AD2 based on the AD minimum qualifications. This position has a one-year probationary period.

Area of concern: Exercise the probationary period if candidate /trainee isn't meeting the requirements of the program or are unable to work rotating shifts.

2 – Year Term Appointment

Candidates who apply for and pass the assessment center, are hired into the system operations group as an AD1 or AD2 based on the AD minimum qualifications

Area of concern: Ability to hire them after successful completion of the BSC ETST program and they have demonstrated the able to adjust to rotating shift work.

Term employee can be released from the program for any reason.

Chapter 4, The Aspiring Dispatcher Program

Introduction:

This program is to give current WAPA employees the opportunity to explore career paths within Dispatch. This program will give employees the academic and on-the-job training required to be eligible for future Power System Dispatcher positions. The program will expose potential candidates to the System Operations environment early on, allowing these candidates to decide whether they desire to work in this type of setting. Using this approach, Power System Operations will have a qualified and prepared pool of Internal applicants to choose from when openings become available.

Participation Requirements:

Any WAPA employee who is currently at or equivalent to the GS-7 or higher level shall be eligible to participate in this program. To participate, the candidate must gain permission from their current supervisor due to periodic training sessions that will occur in System Operations and with outside vendors. The candidate must also be willing to complete online college courses through Bismarck State College (BSC), in pursuit of an Associate in Applied Science Degree in the Electrical Transmission Systems Technology (ETST) program within three (3) years and maintain a 3.0 GPA. These courses will be paid for by the Operations Department, but the candidates will be required to use off-duty time to complete course work.

Program Plan:

Under the Aspiring Dispatcher Program, candidates will remain in their current jobs for the duration of the program. Although participation in the program does not guarantee future employment as a Power System Dispatcher, it will supply participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to be eligible to apply for future openings in the operations department. Participants may choose to exit the program at any time and are not obligated to apply for openings that may occur. Additionally, individual progress will be monitored by the Power System Dispatcher, Trainers and Management to ensure requirements are being met.

The curriculum will include the BSC ETST courses, training sessions with the Power System Dispatcher, Trainers, training sessions using outside vendors, site visits, and on-the-job training. Once the candidate has earned the associate degree in Electrical Transmission System Technology (ETST) from BSC, they will be given the opportunity to take the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) System Operator Certification Exam. Individual training plans and schedules will be coordinated among the participants, the participants' supervisors, Power System Dispatcher, Trainers, and the Operations Support Group Manager.

Aspiring Dispatcher Program, Process Outline

1. Management/HR will send out application packet via email to Western RMR-only employees.

2. Interested employees will submit completed application package, meeting the following requirements:

A. Must be GS-7 or equivalent and higher.
B. Must have supervisory permission to participate.
C. Must answer predetermined questions, which will be used to assess employee interest and suitability for the program.

3. Management/HR will analyze application packets, selecting candidates suitable for Assessment process. If three (3) or more applications are received, a subject matter expert (SME) panel will be used to rate applicants.

4. Successful candidates will be invited to participate in Assessment process.

5. Final selections will be made from those who successfully complete Dispatch Assessment.

6. Program candidates will complete recommended program curriculum within three years. Candidates must maintain a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA).

7. Program candidates will obtain associate in applied science Degree or a Program Completion Certificate from Bismarck State College (BSC) in the Electrical Transmission System Technology (ETST)

8. Program candidates must become NERC certified.

9. Program candidates will be eligible to apply for positions that become available in Dispatch. Vacancies in Dispatch will be advertised under the Merit Promotion plan with Western – RMR as the initial area of consideration.

Internal Training

The in-house training will be given by the Dispatch Trainer and other members of the Operations Staff, as necessary. In-house training will occur in a timely manner, supplementing courses being taken at BSC. This training may include, but is not limited to, the following aspects:

1. Assignments supplemental to BSC courses
2. Dispatch guidelines and procedures
3. Desk observation/On-the-Job Training
4. Site visits (substations, generation plants, neighboring utilities, etc)

To complete the in-house training, participants should expect to spend approximately two weeks per quarter on detail in Dispatch. Some of this time will be spent working rotating shifts along with the Dispatchers, acclimating the candidates to the shift work environment. Additionally, participants should expect to spend approximately one or two hours per week consulting with the Dispatch Trainer or other Operations staff to answer questions and monitor progress throughout the program.

External Training

There are several existing outside training courses which would be beneficial to the Aspiring Dispatcher candidates. These courses will be used if practical and depending on level of knowledge and experience.

The following is an Example of some possible options:

1. Electric Power Training Center (EPTC)
2. Operator Educational Services North America (OES-NA)
3. Various Training Advisory committee's (DSTAC, RMTAC etc.)
4. System Operator Success (SOS)
5. Southwest Power Pool (SPP)
6. Northwest Power Pool (NWPP)
7. Rocky Mountain Power Pool Training
8. California Independent System Operator

Chapter 5, Dispatcher 1-4 Program

This position is part of the WAPA-UGP-Upper Great Plains. As a Power System Dispatcher, you will serve as a trainee receiving assignments to prepare for the full performance position as AD-4 Power System Dispatcher. At full performance the power system dispatcher is responsible for real-time management of reliability activities.

Position responsibilities and duties of the balancing, interchange, and/or the transmission operator in the respective region.

Duties

During an assigned shift, the incumbent has operational control of power generation and transmission facilities of the BES and lower voltage systems in the assigned Western region and the power generation and transmission facilities for which the Western region is agent.

The incumbent has an inherent safety responsibility while performing assigned duties Major duties include Maintains dispatcher log. Records pertinent dispatcher actions, decisions, and observations neatly and accurately. Completes and submits appropriate and timely reports as necessary. Coordinates actions with other dispatchers, customers, external companies, marketing personnel, generator operators, reliability coordinators, and management, as necessary and makes appropriate and timely notifications and personnel callouts.

Analyzes the written log and verbal information from dispatchers leaving shift to ascertain present conditions of the power system. Develops a general plan for the shift based on system conditions and scheduled or anticipated facility outages. Takes prompt and appropriate actions to maintain strict compliance with FERC Standards of Conduct and NERC Standards. Monitors power system equipment, ensuring public safety and proper operation within equipment capabilities.

Initiates or directs timely and appropriate real-time actions during normal and emergency conditions to ensure the stable and reliable operation of the BES and lower voltage systems while taking corrective action, as required to achieve or maintain these limitations, including re-dispatch of generation, cancellation of planned generation and transmission outages without prior supervisory approval.

Complies with the directives of the Reliability Coordinator and/or other power system operating entities, as appropriate, for both real-time and next day operating events. Issues directives to other power system operating entities, as appropriate, to maintain BES and lower voltage systems reliability. Provides technical instruction and guidance to lower-graded positions. Monitors all actions and retains responsibility for all power system actions/activities taken by an employee in training at the same functional position.

How You Will Be Evaluated

You will be evaluated for this job based on how well you meet the qualifications above.

You will be evaluated for this job based on how well you meet the eligibility and qualification requirements above.

Once the announcement closes, we will conduct a review of your application package to verify your eligibility and qualifications. If you are found qualified, your application will move forward to additional phases of the review process.

Merit Promotion: If you are minimally qualified for this job, your responses to the self-assessment questions (True/False, Yes/ No, Multiple Choice questions) will be evaluated to determine if you are a best qualified candidate. If you rate yourself higher than is supported by your application materials, your responses may be adjusted and/or you may be excluded from consideration for this job.

Due weight will also be given to federal employees, when applicable, for performance appraisals and awards in accordance with 5 CFR § 335.103(b)(3). Federal employees must meet time-in-grade requirements and current employees must have at least a fully successful or equivalent performance rating to receive consideration.

Your qualifications will be evaluated on the following competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics):

Continual Learning

Learning

Oral Communication

Non-competitive Procedures: If you are applying under a non-competitive or special hiring authority, you will still be required to answer the assessment questions. However, you will not be evaluated against the rating and ranking criteria.

Your resume and supporting documentation will be used to determine if you are minimally qualified for this job. Veterans' Preference will be applied when required by the hiring authority (e.g., VRA, Schedule A). All qualified Non-competitive applicants and the best qualified Merit Promotion and VEOA applicants will be referred to the hiring manager for consideration.

Career Transition Assistance Programs: To receive selection priority for this position, you must: 1) meet the eligibility criteria; and 2) be rated "well-qualified", which is defined as having a score of 85 or better.You must meet all qualifications and eligibility requirements by the closing date (01/20/2022) of this announcement.

Chapter 6, AD Power System Dispatcher Qualifications

Qualifying Education for the AD-1 Level

General Experience

General experience is 3 years of progressively responsible experience, 1 year of which was equivalent to at least the GS-4 level, which demonstrates the ability to:

1. Analyze problems to identify significant factors, gather pertinent data, and recognize solutions.
2. Plan and organize work; and communicate effectively, orally and in writing.

Listed below are examples of qualifying general experience:
•Use/apply a practical knowledge of general engineering techniques (such as an engineering technician);
• Use/apply a practical knowledge of scientific principles and mathematical computations in the physical or biological sciences (such as a physical science technician, biological technician, or laboratory technician);
• Use/apply a knowledge of electrical theory (such as an electronics technician, electrician, line worker);
• Uses/apply a practical knowledge of systems theory (electrical, electronic, communications) or similar field (technical or electrical craft experience); • Pay close attention to detail (such as a draftsman, surveyor, diagnostician);
• Interpret schematic diagrams (skilled or mechanical trades experience);
or
• Other practical experience (pumping plant operator, water plant operator, sewage plant operator).

Summary Definition of Specialized Experience

Specialized experience must have equipped the applicant with the particular knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform successfully the duties of this position. This experience is progressively responsible and concerned primarily with system operations of a large power system (100-kV or above). Knowledge, such as the following, is required:

• Knowledge of interconnected power systems;
• Knowledge of safe switching procedures;
• Knowledge of power system Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition-type equipment (SCADA), Automatic Generation Control (AGC), Energy Management System (EMS), power scheduling programs, power system tagging programs, Open Access Same-time Information System (OASIS), etc.;
• Knowledge of power system generation (power plant operator);

• Knowledge of power system characteristics;
• Knowledge of power system equipment; and/or balancing authority energy scheduling.

Applicants, who have 1 year of appropriate specialized experience, as indicated in the table, are not required to have general experience, education above the high school level, or any additional specialized experience to meet the minimum qualification requirements.

To be creditable, specialized experience must have been equivalent to at least the next lower level in the normal line of progression for the occupation in the organization.

Specialized Experience Requirements For the AD-2 Level

To qualify for the AD-2 level, you must have 1 year of:

1) Power system experience equivalent to the AD-1 level (trainee), with centralized control of power system equipment with 100-kV or higher voltage transmission lines and substations; or
2) Operations or maintenance experience in writing, issuing, receiving, or performing switching; or performing maintenance on power system equipment at or greater than Distribution Provider Level (4.16kV) as defined by the current North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) Reliability Functional Model; or
3) Utility power system energy scheduler experience equivalent to the AD 1, with responsibility for approving or denying energy tags/schedules and verifying adequate transmission capacity; or
4) Engineering experience, including technician experience, equivalent to at least the GS 5 level in power system design, planning, maintenance, construction, or operations; or
5) Power plant operator experience equivalent to the AD 1, with direct control over one or more dispatchable (output is adjustable) individual generating units of at least 10 megawatts; or
6) Energy merchant experience equivalent to the AD 301 3 level; or
7) Energy merchant or North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) balancing authority/interchange authority experience, equivalent to the AD-1 trainee in matching generation and energy purchasing sales to real time load requirements via automatic generation control (AGC).

Specialized Experience Requirements for the AD-3 Level

To qualify for the AD-3 level, you must have 1 year of:

1) Power system operator experience equivalent to the AD-2 level (advanced trainee), with centralized SCADA/EMS control of power system equipment with 100-kV or higher voltage transmission lines and substations; or
2) Operations or maintenance experience in writing or issuing switching for clearances or similar protective actions on power system equipment at 100-kV or above voltage level; or
3) Energy merchant or North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) balancing authority/interchange authority experience, equivalent to the AD-2 level with responsibility for matching generation and energy purchases/sales to real-time total load requirements via Automatic Generation Control (AGC); or
4) Engineering experience (with engineering degree, or certification as either EI (Engineering Intern), EIT (Engineer in Training), or PE (Professional Engineer), equivalent to the GS-7 level or higher in power system design, planning, maintenance, construction, or operations; or
5) Power plant or control center operator experience, equivalent to the AD-2 level, where normal duties include direct SCADA control over multiple, remotely operated power plants.

Specialized Experience Requirements for the AD-4 Level

To qualify for the AD-4 level, you must have 1 year of:

1) Power system operator experience, equivalent to the AD-3 level, with centralized SCADA/EMS control and decision-making responsibilities to maintain adherence to NERC reliability standards of a power system with 100-kV or higher voltage transmission lines, substations, and interconnections to other utilities.

Chapter 7, NERC Certification

The Trainee will need to complete NERC certification Prior to being fully qualified, listed here is the criteria for NERC certification:

The SOC Program provides the framework for operators to obtain initial certification in one of four NERC credentials:

1. Reliability Coordinator (RC);
2. Balancing, Interchange, and Transmission Operator (BT);
3. Transmission Operator (TO);
4. Balancing and Interchange Operator (BI).

A system operator credential is a personal credential that NERC issues to a person for successfully passing a NERC SOC exam.